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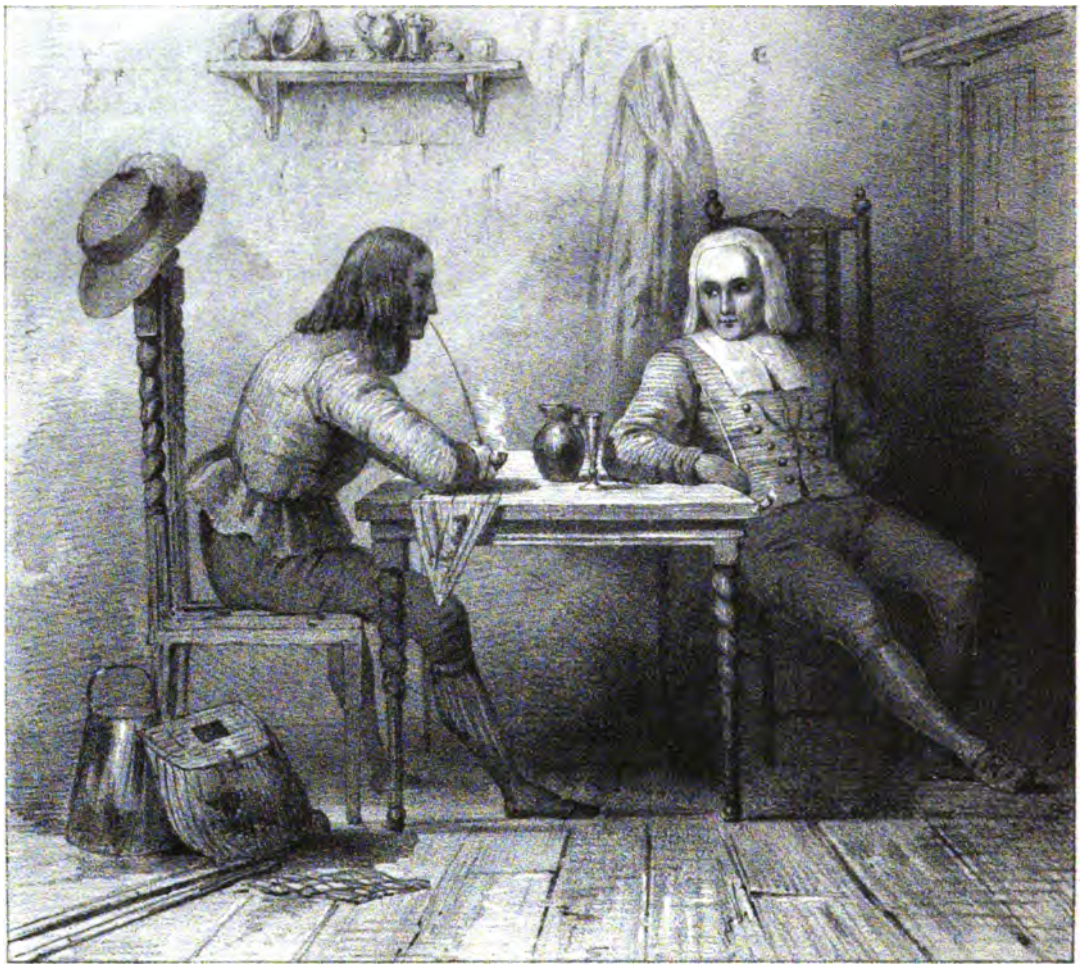
ALEXANDER'S JOURNEY
to
BERESFORD HALL.



Methinks I see Charles Cotton and his friend,
The modest Walton from Augusta's Town,
Enter the Fishing House an hour to spend,
And by the marble table set them down

A JOURNEY

TO

BERESFORD HALL.

THE SEAT OF

CHARLES COTTON ESQ^RE.

THE CELEBRATED AUTHOR AND ANGLER.

BY W. ALEXANDER F. S. A. and L. S.

"COMES JOCUNDUS IN VIA PRO VEHICULO EST."

LONDON.

John Russell Smith,

4 Old Compton Street, Soho.

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TO THE

ANGLERS OF GREAT BRITAIN,

and to the various

WALTON CLUBS,

THIS JOURNEY OF ALEXANDER'S

TO

"BERESFORD HALL."

is

humbly dedicated

BY

A BROTHER OF THE ANGLE.

Islington,
Decr. 2nd 1837.

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PREFACE.

A Journey to **BERESFORD-HALL**, the **SEAT** of **CHARLES COTTON ESQ^re** the celebrated **ANGLER !!!**

why what an irresistible Title?

BERESFORD-HALL! there is something so charming in its sound, that it cannot be described.

To an Angler, it is the **TALLY-HO**, of the **FOX-HUNTER.**

A soul stirring **NECK** and **NECK RACE**, to the **HORSE RACER.**

THE DOWN CHARGE, to the **CRACK SHOT.**

THE SOHO! to the **COURSER.**

THE RATTLING of the **RINGS** to the **FLY-FISHER**, or **TROLLER.**

Allowing all the joys these various sports command, where is one so lasting as that of the **PEACEFUL ANGLER**? the reflection charms and sooth's the downhill of life. what Sport or Pastime but that of **ANGLING**, could rouse the torpid state of manhood at eighty-three? an age when we might expect the stoutest veteran to be "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing." Is there one among the sportsmen above enumerated that would leave his fire side and easy chair and partake of the Joys of the **CHACE**, **THE RACE-GROUND**, **THE STUBBLE FIELD**, &c? I doubt it. However, here is **HONEST OLD IZAAK WALTON'S**, own words upon the subject.

"Though I be more than a hundred miles from you, & in the eighty-third year of my age, yet I will forget both, and next month begin a pilgrimage to see you."

Where to? why, **BERESFORD-HALL !** and the reader must observe this was written to his adopted son **COTTON**, in the year 1676, journeying into a country the most difficult & hazardous that can be conceived for an aged man to travel in, to see his friend, and doubtless to enjoy his favorite diversion of Angling in the delightful streams of the **DOVE**, carrying with him the best and choicest of all earthly blessings, a contemplative mind, and a cheerful disposition, an active and healthful body.

So beauteous did the scenery of this delightful spot appear to him that, to use his own words, The pleasantness of the river, mountains, and meadows about it, cannot be described, unless Sir Philip Sidney, or **Mr COTTON'S** father were alive to do it.

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

William Alexander, F.S.A. and L.S. was Born at Maidstone, April, 10th 1767, where his father, Mr. Henry Alexander, followed the business of a coachmaker. A few of his earlier years were passed at the Grammar school of Maidstone, under the Revd. Thomas Cherry, since Head Master of Merchant Taylor's school, in London; but in 1782, at the age of fifteen, he quitted his native town for the Metropolis, where he was sent for instruction as an Artist. He first studied drawing under Mr. William Parr, of Fountain court, Strand; was afterwards placed with Ibbotson, the celebrated Landscape-painter, and Feby. 27th 1784, became a student at the Royal Academy. In 1792, he was appointed Draughtsman of the Embassy to the Court of China; and accompanied the Earl of Macartney to Pekin, where he remain'd during the Journey to the Northern Frontier. He return'd with the other persons of the European suite in 1794, & in the following year married Miss Jane Wogan, a lady of a respectable family in Wales, whom he had the misfortune to lose within a short time after his marriage. In 1802, he received an appointment as Professor of Drawing at the newly formed Royal Military College at Great Marlow; which he quitted May 28th 1808. on being appointed Assistant Keeper of the Department of Antiquities in the British Museum.

The Drawings which accompanied Sir George Staunton's account of the Embassy to China, published in 1797, were almost exclusively from his pencil. In 1798, he published four plates of "Views of Headlands, Islands, &c, taken during the Voyage to China", amounting to fifty-three in number,

and in the same year completed the Drawings from Mr. Daniel's sketches, which illustrated Captain Vancouver's Voyage to the North Pacific Ocean. The productions of his pencil also ornamented Mr. Barrow's Travels in China; quarto, 1804, as well as that gentleman's Voyage to Cochin China, published in the year 1806. In 1805, Mr. Alexander, published "The Costume of China, illustrated in forty eight coloured Engravings", in quarto, accompanied by explanatory descriptions of the Chinese Manners. This work was so well received by the Public, that he was encouraged to bring out another volume on the same subject, comprising a similar quantity of plates and letter-press. Three Volumes of Engravings from the Terra-Cottas and Marbles in the British Museum, were published in 1810, 1812, and 1815. by the Trustees, the Drawings of which were executed by Mr. Alexander, and the Descriptions written by Mr. Taylor Combe, the Keeper of the Department of Antiquities. Previous to his death, Mr. Alexander, had completed the Drawings of a fourth volume. He died July 23rd 1816, of a brain fever at the house of his uncle at Rocky Hill, near Maidstone, in the county of Kent.

His remains were interred in the Church yard of Boxley, near Maidstone, July, 30th 1816. He was a man of mild and unassuming manners, rich in the knowledge of Art, and of unsullied integrity.

A Portrait of Mr. Alexander, was drawn by H. Edridge, and Engraved by, C. Picart, but never was published.

WALTON and COTTON in the FISHING HOUSE.

Our Sires of old esteem'd this healing leaf,
  Sacred to Bacchus and his rosy train;
And many a Country squire and martial chief,
  Have sung its virtues midst a long campaign.

"Methinks I see Charles Cotton, and his friend,
  The modest Walton, from Augusta's Town,
Enter the Fishing House, an hour to spend,
  And by the marble table set them down

Boy! bring me in the jug of Darby Ale,
  My best Tobacco, and my Smoking Tray,
The boy obedient brings the rich regale,
  And each assumes his pipe of polish'd clay.

Thus sang young Cotton, and his will obey'd,
  And snug the friends are seated at their ease,
They light their Tubes without the least parade,
  And give the fragrance to the playful breeze

Now cloud on cloud pervades the Fishers room,
  The Moreland Ale rich sparkles to the sight,
They draw fresh wisdom from the circling gloom,
  And deal a converse pregnant with delight

So when our Druids inspiration sought,
  They burnt the misletoe to fume around
Th' inspiring vapours gave a strength to thought
  They deal out lore impressive and profound.

Methinks I see them with the mental eye,
  I hear their lessons with attention's ear;
Of early fishing with the Summer fly,
  And many a pleasing tale to Angler's dear

The while they draw from the inspiring weed,
  They boast a charm the Smoker owns supreme.
And now diverted with the polish'd reed,
  Forego the little Fish House by the stream"

Tho this be fancy, still it serves to show
  That wisdoms sons have lov'd Columbia's pride,
And shall, while waters round our Islands flow,
  Tho' fools and fops its healing breath deride

Memry still hold me in her high esteem,
  For lonely setting when the days decline,
Visions sublime, before my fancy gleam,
  And rich ideas from her stores combine.

Saturday Sept. 9th 1815, at 6 A.M. Mr Elliot & my self left London by the Royal Alexander Stage bound to Manchester from the 3 Cups Inn Aldersgate Street, by this conveyance we reached Leicester at 10 P.M. where we slept at the Angel Inn next morning Sept 10th at 5 A.M. left Leicester by the Telegraph (for Manchester) which we left at Brailsford a village about 5 miles short of Ashbourn, The "Sandy hill & brook" described by Walton – that distance beyond Brailsford does not produce a subject illustrative of the letter press in Cotton's angling, tho the scenery is beautiful. Before entering Ashbourn we took the old Road down Spitle hill which was discontinued about 4 years since, for the manifest improvement. The view from this hill is highly picturesque the Town below, & the hills of Thorp, Dove & vicinity forming the Dove Dale, make such a composition as I have seen from the hands of Gaspar Poussin –

Monday 11th Rose at 6 and pursued our Journey towards Dovedale on foot. From the summit of the hill at the extremity of the Town saw the distant mountains of Thorpe Cloud &c bounding the River Dove, Middle Dale and narrow dale, this view being mentioned by Cotton a slight sketch was made, about a mile further is Bentley Brook over which is the Bridge noticed by

Cotton. this scenery being picturesque, a sketch was also made of this Bridge for the illustration of my copy of Walton's Angler. continuing our route a mile or two further we passed the Dog & Partridge which is used for refreshment by Harriers of Dovedale. soon after the country assumes a more sterile aspect, the lands being divided by stone walls the means of passing thro which is by the Derbyshire Stile which is formed thus

The scenery now makes a striking contrast with the exuberant vegetation in the neighbourhood of Ashbourne, continuing our route 2 or 3 miles through this land of dreary country, we came upon Mill Dale and the River Dove, which with the small & narrow Bridge as described by Cotton, forms altogether a most interesting scene, we soon after came in sight of Beresford Hall which opened on us at the distance of about 2 miles, of this first appearance of Cottons residence a slight sketch was made, and having soon afterwards reached this luxuriant spot so highly interesting not only from the Salvator-like subjects & romantic scenery of the River Dove which is the boundary of the domain eastward, but from having been the residence of so eminent a character as Charles Cotton Esqr. Soon after our arrival I commenced a sketch of the Mansion in a nearer point of view.

Tuesday 12 had a Chaise from Ashbourne to Beresford Hall, the road to which is so rugged as to be nearly inaccessible by such conveyance, however after some difficulty we again reached & enjoyed the romantic beauties of this luxuriant the row

neglected spot. Employed myself on sketching the Fishing House erected by Cotton & making a view of Pike Pool, which takes its name from an insulated Rock or Pike which rises from the River to the height of about 30 feet. In a cleft of the rock opposite and very difficult of access is a natural Chamber in which the factious owner is said to have occasionally concealed himself from his Creditors —

Wednesday 13th on our route to Beresford Hall we this day took the way through Ilam, a pleasant village in which is a good house inhabited by a Mr Russell Esqr the Church is a cross about 4 feet in height, the ornaments which are of the Saxon taste are much obliterated, in the S. East Chancel is the ancient Font richly carved with animals & birds, in the grotesque Norman Stile, they rich font is replaced by a modern ill designed vessell, ty is no compliment to the taste of the parishioners. In this chancel is a Mont with Effigies of Robt Mivall & Elyz his wife whose daughter married Thos Lord Cromwell Viscont Leavile, which Robt died 1626. In the midst of this Chancel is also an ancient lid of a coffin, which is enclosed by a cover or screen perforated with quatrefoils tradition gives it to one Bertram, & that it was formerly in the Church Yard —

Thursday 14th sallied forth early for Beresford making as usual our half way house at Alstonefield where we found a good breakfast at the black lion — pursuing our journey we shortly came to Thorp Cloud, a conical mountain which

from this point intercepts the opening of the Dove. The weather being delightful were gratified beyond expression by the grandeur & effect of the surrounding scenery, the subjects frequently reminding me of the productions of the Poussins, Salvator &c having entered, & revelling among the luxuriant & romantic beauties of the dale we passed on the right a curious perforated arched Rock called Reynards Hall, before which we halted five minutes till a sketch was made, at a short distance from this on the Staffordshire side of the dale, is an immense tall isolated rock which mixing with the luxuriant vegetation was a subject to be remembered hereafter by referring to the Sketch — returned to our head quarters at Ashbourn in the Evening —

Friday 15th - left our Inn the Green Man at Ashbourn early, on leaving the town we took the old road called Spittle Hill from which Cotton describes the view of Ashbourn which was a sufficient reason to make a sketch, about 7 miles (on our route to Derby) is Brailsford, where we breakfasted, & afterwards continued our Journey (pedestrians) to Derby which we reached about 1 o Clock, having the advantage of a very fine day, the walk has been delightful —

Having dined at the King's Head, at ½ past 2 left Derby by the (Traveller) Stage for Leicester which we reached at about 8 in the Evening, our Inn here was the Stag & Pheasant where after the refreshment of Tea, we retired to bed early,

Saturday 16th. After a restless night from the noise of Grooms, & departure of Stages, after breakfast we sallied forth to see the curiosities of this Ancient City one of these is a roman military Stone, with an Inscription in which the name of Hadrian occurs, this relic has the additions of a modern pedestal and Top & is preserved by the enclosure of an Iron railing — afterwards we croped the River to see the remains of Leicester Abbey, interesting from the circumstance of having offered an asylum to the fallen Wolsey who died here, after having told the Friars that he had come "to lay his bones among them" vide Shakspeare Hen. 8th. a sketch of course was made for the illustration of my Copy of our immortal Bard. Close by the Church of St. Nicholas is a fragment of the ancient Roman walls, the arches are turned with Roman bricks with a mixture of stones. Leicester is in general unpicturesque, the houses being built of bricks of an ugly red colour.

At 1. AM, we left Leicester by a Birmingham Stage which set us down at Coventry at ½ 0 Clock at the Crown Hotel where we found good Fare & good Beds, in the Evening visited Mr Sharpe a gentleman fond of Antiquarian pursuits & has formed an extensive Collection of materials for a History of this County. & would liberally allow the use of his collection to any person who would make a respectable & proper use of them; the next morning Sunday 17th we breakfasted with Mr. Sharpe, who again gratified us by the exhibition of an extensive collection for this his native City of Coventry - I must again speak of the liberality of Mr S. who would lend his information to any one competent to make a proper use of his papers &c; we afterwards walked about the Town (pomised the Traders gazed upon the buildings) saw the Churches of St Michaels & St Mary. The former of these has a lofty Tower & Spire supported by flying buttresses which with the whole exterior of the body, is highly enriched with statues &c but we have to regret that the material being the soft red sand stone of the Country is of so mouldering a nature that scarcely any part is left in an angular state the statues which adorn the Tower of St Michaels should be excepted being of white marble. The Tower & Steeple of the Grey Friars, is elegant but in the same

mutilated state, Bubbleke Church has no spire & the tower is not built from the stone of this Country - The Guild hall called St Mary Hall is again unfortunately of the red perishable stone, from the friable nature of the stone the ornaments have lost their sharpness. This is otherwise a building of much interest the interior of the hall being lined with portraits of eminent characters Two of the City Gates are still remaining of the same red stone - Many of the old picturesque gabled houses remain in this City, these are contrasted by the rest which are built of brick of the reddest colour. Lord Leas Houses for old men & women is a very comfortable asylum & the building itself is a good subject of the Domestic architecture of that time the date being 1529 -

At ½ past 3 left Coventry by a stage for Daventry which we reached at 7 p.m. having dined at the Wheatsheaf where they have also good beds, we left Daventry at 6 next morning being Monday 18th for London having passed through Market Street Redburn &c at 7 p.m. reached Islington where we left the stage having had a pleasant Tour, an agreable companion, & fine weather, & thank God, without any mishap having befallen us, W A

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